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PRINCIPAL ACCESSIONS

THE HAND OF GOD, BY RODIN. — A marble group by Rodin, entitled "La Main de Dieu," has just been received as a gift from a member of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Edward D. Adams. The same group in bronze was purchased by the *Directeur des Beaux Arts* for the French Government, and a larger marble copy is owned by a private collector in Paris.

The accompanying reproduction of this remarkable piece of sculpture will serve to give some idea of its beauty, and we quote the description of it given by Frederic Lawton in his life of Rodin:

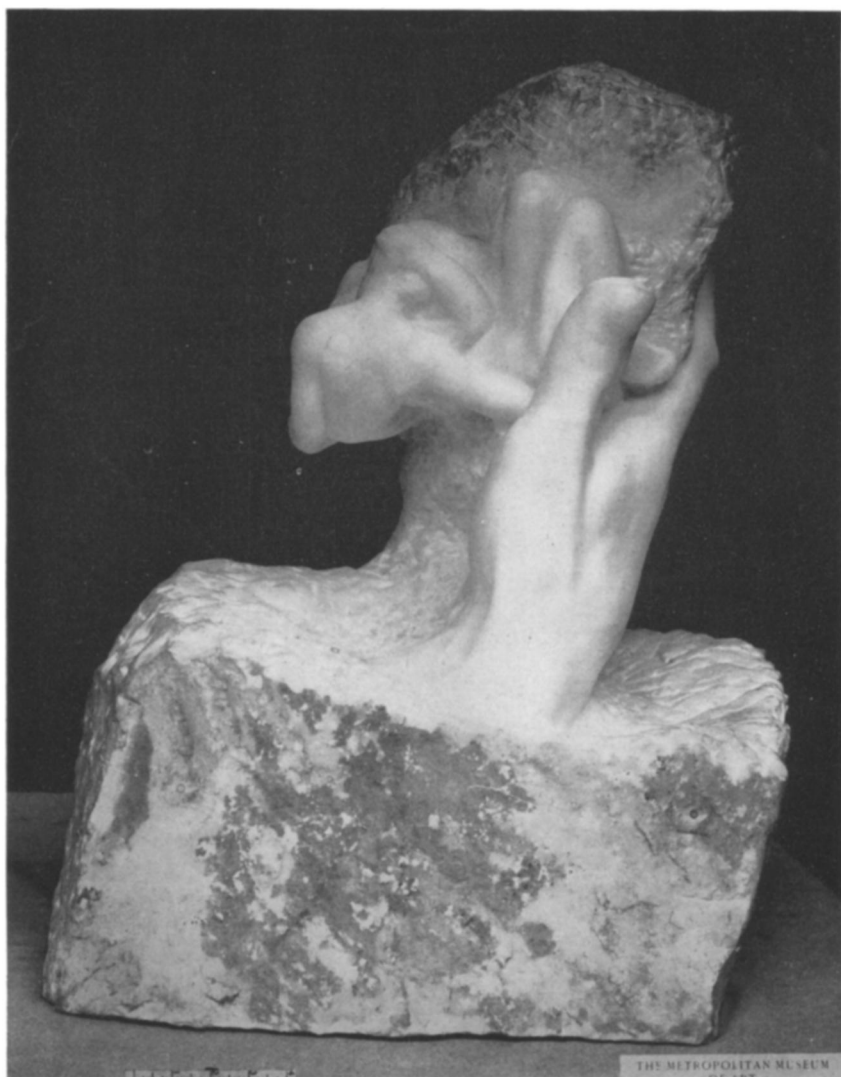
"Unique and apart [from other sculptures made in the year 1900] was the 'Hand of God,' a huge hand modeled with all the science of an anatomist, physiologist, and chiromancer combined, and all the art the sculptor can show in fashioning the whole body. In the palm were a miniature Adam and Eve resting on a portion of the clay that had served to make them, the rôle and character of each sex being indicated—the woman embracing, the man protecting."

A LANDSCAPE BY GASPAR DUGHET, called Gaspar Poussin.—But for the accident which brought Nicolas Poussin to be

the invalid guest of the Dughet family at Rome, Gaspar might never have been an artist at all, would certainly never have been the artist he was. For great as his talent, fine as his taste, and genuine as his love of landscape were, his was not the great creative genius that would have discovered the formula for expressing his sentiment about nature. As it was, Nicolas became the inmate of his fellow-countryman's house, married his sister, and took the young Gaspar as his pupil. Gaspar was born at Rome in 1613 and formed his art as we have seen on that of Nicolas Poussin. He never attained quite to the classic severity and purity of design of his master; his feeling was more akin to that of the romanticists of last century, and his extreme facility of hand enabled him to give expression to this feeling in a remarkable manner.

His conception of landscape was naturally influenced by the works of Claude which he saw at Rome; from him he derived a sense of chiaroscuro which was foreign to the art of Nicolas Poussin. The example acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, though it has not quite the subtlety of tone of the splendid landscape in the National Gallery, may be considered as among his better works.

R. E. F.



THE HAND OF GOD, BY AUGUSTE RODIN

GIFT OF EDWARD D. ADAMS

(SEE PAGE 209)

CERAMICS.—The museum has lately purchased a number of unusual pieces of faïence brought from different localities of the Near East. Included among these are examples of Mesopotamian ware, dating from a period as early as the last quarter of the eighth century of our era; Sultana-bad or Syro-Egyptian wares of the fourteenth, and other Persian ware of unknown provenance, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

A Mesopotamian (Rakka) jug may be dated as early as the year '70 of the Hegira, since a bowl of similar technique and provenance and inscribed with that date has recently come to light—the first dated example of early Rakka ware yet found. Of a later period—the thirteenth century—the museum now possesses six representative examples. These are glazed a rich greenish-blue and decorated with arabesques, floral designs, or inscriptions (fig. 1) in underglaze black. A fragmentary example of Rakka luster is in the form of a bowl decorated with a central floral design, and bearing an inscription in repeats that enriches the inner rim, possibly a potter's conventional mode of painting the word "alafia" or "blessing."

Mesopotamian mural decoration of the

same period is illustrated by a pair of green-glazed tiles ornamented in relief with designs of wild beasts, both real and mythological, a survival it may well be of the animal friezes that decorated temple

and palace walls under the ancient sway of the Achæmenid Kings. Early Persian ceramic art is represented by two Sultana-bad mural tiles covered respectively with designs of gazelles amidst foliage and rich floral designs in colors. A dark-blue shallow bowl and a pair of richly lustered wall tiles date from the same period. The so-called Syro-Egyptian pottery is illustrated by five well-preserved bowls and two vases. All are decorated with floral designs or waves in more or less profusion, the tones being for the most part a dark or watery blue and black above a white ground. Throughout Syria, and in Egypt

as far south as Keneh, this Syro-Egyptian ware is found amidst the ruins of sun-dried brick houses that have fallen during earthquakes, fire or war. As a result, examples have seldom survived intact; too often they reach us in the shape of mere fragments. Even when a perfect example does happen to be preserved to us, the design is very likely covered with a film



CHAIR. SWISS, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

of that cankering iridescence that has utterly destroyed so many valuable ceramic objects. The bowl (fig. 2) is one of the most perfectly preserved and tastefully decorated examples of this rare mediæval faïence at present known. This piece, and others to which we have alluded, may now be seen in Gallery 5 of the second floor, near the room containing the collection of Chinese porcelains lent by Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan.
G. C. P.

SWISS PEASANT WORK.—The Museum has recently acquired a number of pieces of Swiss woodwork, comprising chairs, painted boxes, and carved panels, which form a welcome addition to the Seventeenth Century Room, from Flims in Switzerland, purchased three years ago and soon to be exhibited in the Hoentschel Wing.

Earliest in date are several pieces of Gothic woodwork, probably obtained from the crossbeams of a ceiling and paneling around windows, and showing a design of foliage and grotesque animal figures. These are executed partly in flat, and partly in chip-carving, to which the soft Alpine pine wood lends itself so well.

Both types, especially that known as chip-carving, characterize the peasant work of the Germanic races and are found in Lower Germany, Holland, and in Scandinavia, as well as in the Black Forest, Switzerland, and the Tyrol. Typical, too, is the painting in strong, bright colors, traces of which are still to be seen on our examples. The ground was usually of black, and the ornaments painted in tones of white, green, and red. One can observe this bright coloring in the painted wooden boxes, which show the same scheme of white, green, red, and black, the red strongly predominating. They belong to the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, although there is little variation in style—a loyalty to tradition being a distinguishing feature of all peasant work.

On the lids of the older pieces, dating from the second half of the sixteenth century, are pictured drinking and country scenes in the open air, depicting the free and easy life of the Swiss mercenaries—who in those days were soldiers of world-renown. On another example we find a Biblical subject—Judith and Holofernes. In the later works the ornament is more simple, mostly consisting of flowers scattered on a red ground interspersed here and there with coats of arms.

Though the feeling for style exhibited in these carvings may not be highly developed, one is charmed by its close relation to the natural beauties of the locality. The flowers are those of the Alps—gentian, edelweiss, harebells, and Alpine roses. One of the panels, in fact, shows a design of thistles, a *motif* only to be found in the Gothic art of this vicinity.

The Alpine plants have crept even into the ornamentation of the chair backs, one showing a design of edelweiss and gentians, although the majority are more nearly related to the conventional European style of the period, showing French and German influence.

Most of the seventeen chairs date from the eighteenth century, and exhibit a type of back used for centuries in Switzerland and the neighboring countries. The lower part curves inward and an opening in the center allows the chair to be easily lifted. Toward the top, the back widens in two semicircles, whose point of intersection is marked by an ornament in the shape of a shell, a head, or a tuft of foliage. Sometimes the opening in the middle is formed by the open mouth of a grotesque head, a motive that really belongs to the seventeenth century, and especially to the so-called Conch-Shell Style, with its large fantastic ornament, which flourished about 1650. Two examples of this type, with its somewhat nerveless and insipid ornamentation, are shown.

W. V.